

USDA Assistance to Communities Affected by Church Burnings

USDA financial assistance may be able to help communities affected by church burnings. While USDA cannot support reconstruction of church buildings, it may be able to finance community services that

- restore or enhance support services that were housed in church-owned buildings
- reduce the threat of future acts of destruction through emergency call systems, police departments, and jails
- reduce the costs of insurance on church structures by improving fire protection

Overview

USDA's Rural Housing Service (RHS) provides direct and guaranteed loans to non-profit institutions and public bodies in rural areas and towns with a population of 20,000 or less to construct, enlarge, extend, or otherwise improve community facilities providing essential services. Although RHS' Community Facilities Loan Program (CF) cannot assist churches directly, it can support a wide range of community services that may have been housed in a church facility. These include the financing of facilities that provide services to the public, such as child and adult day care, transportation, senior citizens centers, and meals on wheels. The CF Program can also reduce or respond to the threat of future acts of destruction by supporting fire protection and law enforcement services. In some instances, the Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant program (WW) of the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) may be able to assist small rural communities to incorporate design features in water systems that enhance fire protection services and help reduce the cost of insurance.

Types of Facilities Assisted

The CF Program may be used for a wide range of facilities offering essential services to the public. These include police and fire stations, fire protection equipment, dry hydrants, other emergency services, assisted living and residential care homes, psychiatric care hospitals, chemical dependency rehabilitation centers, mental health clinics, adult and child day care centers, community centers, vocational schools, homes for the handicapped and teenage delinquents, vocational rehabilitation centers, social services buildings, jails, and courthouses.

Examples of Projects Eligible for Assistance

Community centers and multi-use buildings provide congregational places for rural residents. These facilities offer community, youth, and health related activities, educational programs and classes concerning crime prevention and self defense strategies and can have an impact on decreasing crime within the community.

Police departments provide increased security for all populations and conduct crime prevention classes. The CF Program has provided financial assistance to construct and equip police stations and establish advanced emergency assistance strategies such as 911 services.

Jails and county courthouses are necessary to house criminals and to maintain stability within the rural communities.

Fire protection facilities and emergency response vehicles offer the possibility of reducing damage and injury from fires and can support fire prevention programs to reduce the risks of fire within communities.

Dry hydrants can enable the use of nearby sources of water, such as ponds or streams, for fire protection in areas not served by a public water system, improving response times and lowering the costs of insurance. In addition to the CF program, the Water and Waste Disposal (WW) program can finance dry hydrants where they are installed as part of an overall areawide water system.

Homes for troubled youth provide rehabilitation services for residents who might otherwise continue to live in turmoil. One example is a residential substance abuse center which is used for non-medical detoxification, resocialization, and outpatient services.

Hospitals and health care services provide prevention and detoxification programs for alcohol and drug abuse. Psychiatric hospitals and mental health centers provide counseling and rehabilitation, as well as needed medical attention.

Assisted living facilities for senior citizens, treatment centers for the mentally depressed, group homes for developmentally disabled populations, and child and elderly day care facilities assist rural citizens who are dependent on specialized care.

Public schools, colleges, and vocational schools in rural areas provide career programs to help rural youth prepare for a better future and help adults adjust to economic change. These developmental programs decrease community stress and increase opportunities for individuals.

Shelters for battered women provide temporary living quarters and counseling services for women who might otherwise be at risk living in abusive situations.

How to Apply

The Community Facilities and Water and Waste Programs are administered by state and local offices of USDA Rural Development, which will help with eligibility and application procedures. Consult your phone book under U.S. Government, or contact any USDA office for information.

For More Information

- Contact any State or local office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development. Consult your phone book under U.S. Government. Descriptive brochures are available for all USDA Rural Development programs.
- Information about all USDA Rural Development programs is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.
- The Clearinghouse for Arson Prevention Resources provides information and technical assistance on arson prevention methods and sources of assistance. Call 1-888-603-3100. Information is also available at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Web site at <http://www.fema.gov>.
- Public service announcements on arson prevention are available for radio and TV from FEMA. Call 1-800-323-5248.
- To provide information that may help in the investigation of church arsons, call the U.S. Department of Treasury's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms at 1-888-ATF-FIRE.

Additional copies are available from the Office of Community Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Room 701, 300 7th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20024 (1-800-645-4712). Copies may also be obtained at

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd>